

School Meals Initiative Fact Sheet

What is the *School Meals Initiative (SMI) for Healthy Children*?

Effective July 13, 1995, the *Schools Initiative for Healthy Children* regulations governing the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs was implemented. The regulations require that all school lunches and breakfasts meet the applicable recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and USDA's nutrient standards.

What are the applicable *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*?

- Eat a variety of foods
- Balance the food you eat with physical activity—maintain or improve your weight
- Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium

What are USDA's Nutrient Standards?

USDA's nutrient standards are age/grade appropriate minimum standards for calories, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, and calcium and maximum standards for percentage of calories from total fat and percentage of calories from saturated fat.

How are menus planned with the new rules?

School Food Authorities must use one of five approaches for menu planning. The approaches include:

- Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
- Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
- Nutrient Standard Menu Planning
- Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning
- Alternate Menu Planning Approach (must have prior State Agency Approval)

Different approaches may be used in different schools and different approaches may be used for breakfast and lunch in the same school.

How will menus be reviewed for compliance with the SMI rules?

The regulations require that SFAs be monitored to ensure that school breakfasts provide $\frac{1}{4}$ of the age/grade appropriate Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for certain nutrients and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the age/grade appropriate energy allowance, and that school lunches

provide 1/3 of the age/grade appropriate RDAs and 1/3 of the age/grade appropriate energy allowance as well as meeting the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The State agency will monitor menus for compliance with these nutrition standards at a minimum of once every five years. A nutrient analysis will be conducted on selected menus for a week for food-based menu planning systems. Examination of methodology and documentation of data used in nutrient analysis will be reviewed for School Food Authorities using Nutrient Standard or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning.

Will the nutrient monitoring be done as part of the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE)?

The SMI review is a separate review that may be conducted at the same time that a CRE is scheduled or may be performed as a separate program review.

What records will be needed to conduct the nutrient analysis?

One week's menus for each grade/age level served for one or more schools under the jurisdiction of the SFA will be reviewed. If problems are found, the State may expand the review to include other schools within the SFA. Records needed include:

- Menus for the week being reviewed
- Complete production records for the week being reviewed
- Copies of local recipes planned for/used during the review week as well as SFA directions for preparing USDA recipes (use of alternate and optional ingredients and other changes)
- Nutrition Fact Labels or manufacturer's nutrition documentation of commercially-prepared foods used during the week being reviewed
- Food product descriptions
- Number of a la carte sales, adult meals, and other meals, which are part of the production record
- Printouts provided from the USDA-approved software for the week being reviewed when a school is following Nutrient Standard and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning or is utilizing USDA-approved software to conduct their own nutrient analysis for food-based menu planning
- Copies of Child Nutrition (CN) labels or product formulation statements for food-based menu planning approaches

What will the criteria be for meeting the Dietary Guidelines and Nutrient Standards?

- When averaged over a school week, lunches meet 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and 1/3 of the energy allowance (calories) for appropriate age or grade groups

- When averaged over a school week, breakfasts meet 1/4 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for the above nutrients and 1/4 of the energy allowance (calories) for appropriate age or grade groups
- When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain 30% or less of total calories from fat
- When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain less than 10% of calories from saturated fat
- Reduction in levels of sodium and cholesterol and an increase in dietary fiber for all school meals since the last SMI review

What actions may be necessary if the new regulations are not met?

School Food Authorities that do not meet the *Dietary Guidelines* and nutrient standards will receive technical assistance from the State agency to assist them in developing a corrective action plan for meeting the goals of the School Meals Initiative. SFAs are expected to take prompt and appropriate actions to implement the corrective action plan. Should issues develop that cause delays or needed changes, the SFA is expected to promptly notify the State and renegotiate the corrective action plan.

SFAs are expected to act in good faith to bring about needed corrective action. SFAs that fail to act in good faith are subject to withholding or loss of reimbursement funds.

If you desire further information on this topic, please contact:

Place State Agency Address Here